

Report about my blessed trip to Morocco, April 2014

Bismillahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim

As-salatu wa's-salam 'ala Rasulihi'l-karim

On Thursday the 3rd of April I left for Morocco with the intention of studying some Qur'an in the Moroccan desert (Sahara, south of the city ar-Rashidiyyah) and improving my Arabic. I had a short leave of 4 weeks *alhamdulillah*.

For 4 weeks long I kept a journal and what follows is a summary of what I wrote down coupled with insights and benefits for students of knowledge with a particular interest in Morocco. From the beginning I need to state that nothing went as I planned it. Allah took me to a completely different direction than wanted. This reminds us of a saying of sidi Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili (r.): "If you must plan, and how can you not plan, then plan only for how not to plan!" Instead of studying Qur'an I ended up exploring the world of tasawwuf.

I was blessed to visit many places and meet many people and I had some wonderful experiences *alhamdulillah*.

I'll first list the **places** I have visited in a more or less chronological order:

1. Marrakech
2. Qala'at Mkounah / Zawayah 'Abd al-Malik
3. Fez
4. Qala'at Mkounah / Zawayah 'Abd al-Malik
5. Ait Sawoun

* Ouad(i) Dar'a:

4. Zagora

5. Tamegroute
6. Unknown place between Zagora en Akdez
7. Ouarzazate
8. Unknown place near Ourzazate
9. Marrakech
10. Qala'at Sraghnah
11. Bani / Awlad (?) 'Iyad
12. Beni Mellal
13. Unknown place close to Beni Mellal
14. Berrechid
14. Bouskourah
15. Casablanca
16. Fez
17. Rabat
18. Kenitra
19. Salé
20. Temara

Madaris and ***zawaya*** I visited:

- Madrassah Bin Yusuf, Marrakech
- Zawiyah 'Abd al-Malik, Qala'at Mkounah
- Madrassah and Kuttab ('Abdallah Gannun) Masjid Hafsah, Fez (Mont Fleurie)
- Jami'ah al-Qarawiyyin, old (in the medina) and new (outside the medina)

- Zawiya al-‘Alawiyyah ad-Darqawiyyah ash-Shadhiliyyah in Fez
- Zawiya sidi ‘Ali al-Jamal, Fez
- Zawiya Muhammad b. Nasir al-Dar’i, Tamegroute
- Zawiya and madrassah Sidi Ibrahim bin al-Basir in Bani / Awlad (?) ‘Iyad
- Masjid and zawiya of sidi shaykh Ahmad Tijani, Fez
- Madrassah Bou ‘Inaniyyah, Salé

And some other places I forgot or didn’t know the name of.

Scholars I met:

- Shaykh Mortada Albumashuli, Qala’at Mkounah
- Shaykh mawlay al-Hashimi, Qala’at Mkounah
- Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Haddad, Fez
- Shaykh Isma’il b. al-Basir, Bani / Awlad (?) ‘Iyad
- Shaykh ‘Abd al-Mughith bin al-Basir, Berrechid
- a Tijani shaykh called Ibrahim, Fez (originally from Senegal)
- Shaykh mawlay Isma’il, Fez
- Ustadh b. Muhammad al-Wahhabi, (from Tanger) in Fez
- Shaykh Hassan al-Kittani, Rabat

And other ‘ulama whose names I don’t know or forgot.

Graves of **awliya** and **‘ulama** I visited:

- Qadi ‘Iyyad, Marrakech
- Imam al-Jazuli, Marrakech

- Imam al-Sabti, Marrakech
- 'Allamah Ahmad Sukayrij, Marrakech
- Mawlay 'Abd al-Malik, Qala'at Mkounah
- Sidi 'Abd al-Wahid ibn 'Ashir, Fez
- Sidi 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Dabbagh, Fez
- Sidi Ahmamush b. Ahmamush, Fez
- Mawlay Idris, Fez
- Sidi 'Ali b. Harzihim, Fez
- Sidi Qasim al-Khasasi, Fez
- Shaykh Ahmad Tijani, Fez
- Sidi Yusuf al-Fasi, Fez
- Shaykh Abu Bakr al-'Arabi, Fez (not buried at the graveyard of Bab Futuh, but at the one near Bab Boujloud)
- Sidi Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Ashir, Salé
- Sidi 'Abd al-Qadir al-Harathi, Salé
- Sidi 'Abdallah b. Hassun, Salé
- Sidi al'Arabi as-Sayah, Rabat

And other *awliya* whose names I forgot.

I received the *idhn* (permission) -which is like an *ijazah*- from shaykh Mortada to read:

- The *wird* of shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib¹
- The famous **Nasiri du'a**²

¹ See here for an English translation and short commentary: <https://bewley.virtualave.net/wird.html>

² See here: http://bewley.virtualave.net/Nasiri_Dua.pdf; for a nice introduction to this du'a read here: <http://bewley.virtualave.net/Nasiri.html>; for more material on this du'a see here: <http://www.deenislam.co.uk/dua/Nasiri-and-Munfarija.htm>

- The **Hizb ul-Bahr** from Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili³

Reciting any of these *awrad*, *adhkar* or *ahzab* without an *idhn* is allowed but a lack of respect (*su al-adab*) shaykh Mortada told me.

The *wird* of shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib was recited almost every day of my trip. There are some (partial) commentaries on this *wird*:

- One by shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib himself in the **Diwan** called *Ta'yyatu'l-Wird ash-Sharif*
- One by shaykh sayyid Hammud ibn al-Bashir from Algeria, called "**Commentary on the Hizb of Gnostic Du'as**", a student of shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib

The **Diwan** is a special and blessed book and anyone who reads it will confirm this. I read it was also used to instruct the children of the *fuqara* the Arabic language due to the high level of the Arabic. It contains -next to *suwar* from the Qur'an- *qasa'id* about:

- tasawwuf
- 'aqidah
- *adab* and *akhlaq*
- *shama'il* of the Prophet s.a.w.s.

And some *qasa'id* from other authors than shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib as well. Shaykh Mortada gave us some insights into the **Diwan** while we were travelling.

And next to this I met other 'ulama, imam's, many honorable students of the Qur'an, *tullab*, *fuqara* and other interesting and otherwise 'normal' people.

I like to give a special thanks to all the people who helped me before and during this trip. You know who you are, I'll not mention you by name. May Allah reward all of you plentiful.

³ See here: <http://www.almirajsuficentre.org.au/Awrad%20PDFs/Hizbul%20Bahr.pdf> (Arabic and English); for an audio, see here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNqubcH_TwE

Marrakech

I visited Marrakech twice during my trip. I had spent one night before in Marrakech in 1997, on my way to Agadir, and all I remembered was the Jama'a al-Fna, the big central square.

There are several interesting things in Marrakech to do and see. You can't miss the Jama'a al-Fna of course. Fna is *al-fana* and it reminded me of the Sufi concept *al-fana fi'Llah*⁴ although the square is more about *fana fi'd-dunya*.

When there you definitely have to visit the so called *Saba'at ur-Rijal*, the Seven Men, the 7 patron saints or *awliya* of Marrakech, may Allah have mercy with all of them. I didn't manage to visit all of them but I visited about 4 of them *alhamdulillah*. The most important one is of course imam Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Jazuli, author of the famous, blessed and celebrated **Dala'il al-Khayrat**. I visited his grave twice, on the second time I visited Marrakech during my trip on one day due to something Allah wanted. We read some Qur'an and part of the **Dala'il** at his grave. I wasn't able to visit him the days I stayed in Marrakech initially at the beginning of my trip. Then I only visited the *qubbah* (dome) of Qadi 'Iyyad and 'allamah Ahmad Sukayrij *rahimahumullah* and of some saint whose name I forgot (I think it was sidi 'Abd al-'Aziz at-Tabba'a *rahimahullah*). Finding the domes/*zawaya* of these 7 *awliya* in the city on your own is not easy and you will need day or so to visit all of them and pay them your respects by praying for them and yourself and reading surah al-Fatihah, Yasin etc. Best thing is you have a guide. The *qubbah* of Qadi 'Iyyad is the farthest one if you start from the central square Jama'a al-Fna, next to the city wall, a far walk. The last saint I visited was sidi Abu'l-'Abbas as-Sabti *rahimahullah*. For more detailed info about these 7 *awliya* there used to be a very good article online by **Dar-Sirr** but that website is offline sadly enough. I'd say the graves of imam al-Jazuli and Qadi 'Iyyad are the most important ones which you can't miss.

Something definitely worth a visit is the Madrassah Bin Yusuf⁵, which is pretty easy to find in the medina of Marrakech. This Qur'an(ic) *madrassah* doesn't function anymore and is a museum nowadays, open to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It was open

⁴ Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib *rahimahullah* actually as a *qasidah* about this in his Diwan which we will mention below. The title of that *qasidah* is *Ha'iyatu al-Fana fi'Llah*

⁵ See: <http://www.medersa-ben-youssef.com/>

and functioning until 1960, as the biggest (Qur'anic) *madrassah* in Morocco, named after sultan 'Ali bin Yusuf b. Tashfin, the son of the famous Murabitun ruler Yusuf ibn Tashfin⁶. Here you can get a good glimpse of how students used to live and also see the splendor of the *madrassah*. One of its most famous and best teachers was shaykh Muhammad al-Ifrani (1670-1747 CE). He was a historian, imam and *khatib*.

Last but not least: the Kutubiyyah mosque and complex. This is the top three of Islamic sites in Marrakech. I attended the *jumu'ah* prayer there the day after I arrived.

Only later I found out the grave of Ibn Rushd *rahimahullah* (d. 1198 CE), the author of **Bidayat ul-Mujtahid**, is also in Marrakech, but perhaps not very well known.

Qala'at Mkounah / Zawayah 'Abd al-Malik

From Marrakech I went to Qala'at Mkounah, more specific to the area around Zawayah 'Abd al-Malik, where shaykh Mortada lives with his family. (From now on I needed to and could speak Arabic only.) For this I had to cross the Atlas mountains by bus. It was a 6 hour trip through a very beautiful landscape with high mountain peaks and strange desert views. *Qala'at* means castle or fortress (*hisn*) and Mkounah could refer to either the mountain or the river. Qala'at Mkounah is known for several things:

- the roses (*al-wurud*) and products like rosewater etc.; they have a yearly rose festival in May when the roses are fully grown and seeable everywhere at the borders of the grounds owned by the people
- daggers, although the men don't really carry them anymore
- the tribes, it is a tribal area, clearly marked by signs like Ait ..., Ait ...; Ait means *qabilah*; Ait is for the Berbers (Amazigh) and Beni is used for the Arab tribes in Morocco.

Shaykh Mortada lives near the Zawayah 'Abd al-Malik, a *zawayah* named after his grandfather (*rahimahullah*), a scholar and *wali*, who has been buried close to the mosque near his house, while his own house is also a *zawayah* at the same time. I

⁶ See here: <https://bewley.virtualave.net/tashfin.html>

was his guest and slept there. The son of his uncle, shaykh *mawlay* Hashimi still lives in the Zawiyah ‘Abd al-Malik with his family. That *zawiyah* is unique in Morocco as it unites both the Darqawi and Tijani Sufi paths. See here a video about the *zawiyah* with shaykh Mortada: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMRLIyDACY> In that *zawiyah* there is a library with some very old manuscripts of Islamic books. Shaykh *mawlay* Hashimi lives there and all he does is study, read books, teach and do *dhikr*. Sometimes he goes to the mountains for three months or more to do *da’wah masha’Allah*. Shaykh Mortada is a leading shaykh of the Darqawi order in Morocco and a Maliki *faqih*, member of the **Majlis ‘Ilmi** in his area. He studied with his father who was also a shaykh (*rahimahullah*). He told me he still studies with ‘*ulama* in the Atlas mountains. They, they shaykh and his family, are of Arab descent related to the Prophet s.a.w.s. and function as people who make *islah* between the tribes whenever there are problems, a noble job with many responsibilities. His family has done that for a very long time. Shaykh Mortada also has a yearly *mawsim* of some days, to gather the *fuqara* of the *tariqah* worldwide, and this year it was to be end of May *insha’Allah*. I didn’t have enough leave to stay for that occasion. Qala’at Mkounah is a beautiful and remarkable place to visit. The landscape, the houses (*qasbah*’s) of mud, the people (Berbers and dark skin), nature etc. In Qala’at Mkounah we visited many people and attended many social gatherings and gatherings of *dhikr*, with the common people, *fuqara*, *tullab* and ‘*ulama*. Our constant “companions”⁷ were the Qur’an and the **Diwan** of shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib *rahimahullah*. We were given insights in and explanations of parts of the **Diwan**. The gathering were always closed with the so called *qasidah* of departure of the **Diwan**. Parts of the **Burdah** of al-Busiri *rahimahullah* were also sung at several occasions (just like Hamza Yusuf said he heard it everywhere in Mauritania) and I remember a scholarly discussion about whether or not Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani *rahimahullah* wrote a commentary on the **Burdah** or not (there are some 90 commentaries on the **Burdah**).⁸ Ibn Hajar al-Haythami *rahimahullah* did for sure but if Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani did is not really sure, information about it is very difficult to find. Much of the poetry / *qasa’id* in the **Diwan** of shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib and his *wird* can be found online. An example of one of the *qasa’id* from the **Diwan** is the *qasidah* on Allah’s Most Beautiful Names,

⁷ This means we constantly recited the Qur’an and sung *qasa’id*.

⁸ According to the author of a thesis on the *Burdah* he actually did. Read here (pag. 50): <https://dar.aucegypt.edu/bitstream/handle/10526/1334/2008sumroseaslan.pdf?sequence=1>

which can be seen and heard here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSzyA1dBzDE#t=82> This is actually filmed in the *madrassah* Imam Nafi' in a place near Goulmima, where I initially wanted to study Qur'an. I heard a live performance of it during one of the gatherings we attended.

It was in one of the villages surrounding Qala'at Mkounah, that shaykh Mortada arranged for me to study Qur'an at a *madrassah*. The system was explained and there are basically two kinds of *madaris* (in the whole of Morocco):

1. The ones funded by government *awqaf*;
2. The ones maintained by *muhsinin*.

Some of the *ummahat mutun* studied in the traditional *madaris* of Morocco:

- **Matn Ibn 'Ashir** ('aqidah, fiqh and tasawwuf)
- **Lamiyyatu'l-Af'al** (*sarf*: morphology)
- **Al-Burdah** (praise on the Prophet s.a.w.s.)
- **Al-Hamziyyah** (praise on the Prophet s.a.w.s.) by al-Busiri
- **Al-Ajurumiyyah** (*nahu*: syntax)

After giving it some thought he said I could better go to a *madrassah* in Fez as that would be easier for me. It was too difficult to arrange study for me at the *madrassah* I had wanted, south of ar-Rashidiyyah, due to the law and the fact it was a little far away from Qala'at Mkounah and the *madrassah* near Qala'at Mkounah itself would also be difficult.

So I went to Fez although I didn't plan to go there at all. I took his advice.

Fez

During my trip I visited Fez twice. I had visited Fez before several times and thought I knew it a little but I really didn't I realized afterwards. Fez has many hidden treasures and gems to discover. In Fez I was to enroll in the *madrassah* belonging to Masjid Hafsah, in the neighborhood of Mont Fleurie, in the new part of the city, far from the

medina. It was a beautiful and big masjid with the *kuttāb* right across the street. After *fajr* and *maghrib* one *hizb* of the Qur'an was read in a very beautiful way in *jama'ah* in Warsh. One thing people need to know that if they go and want to study Qur'an in Morocco is that they will need to learn the recitation style of Warsh as Hafs is not common. And they will need to realize that the prayer is conducted in the Maliki way with only one *salam* at the end of the prayer in most *masajid* and *sadl*, especially in the countryside and amongst the people of *tasawwuf*. I stayed in a flat with young students of the Qur'an from Spain, UK, Belgium and Mexico. I saw them using a *lawh* and writing with burned sheep wool soaked in water and a pen made from bamboo *masha'Allah*. To join the *madrassah* I needed to register with the new Qarawiyyin university (outside the medina) as they overlook all *madaris* in Fez. The government wants to know who studies where and you can't join a *madrassah* without registering with them. We made an appointment but didn't get a hold of the responsible person. So this didn't work out. The few days I was in Fez we went to some *majalis* of *dhikr*. One in the *zawiyah* of sidi 'Ali al-Jamal *rahimahullah* (in the medina, al-Andalus; he was the shaykh of Mawlay al-'Arabi al-Darqawi *rahimahullah*) and one in the rather new *zawiyah* of shaykh 'Abdullah al-Haddad (in the neighborhood of Bin Suda)⁹, a scholar of the outward and inward sciences. Those were beautiful and interesting gatherings. In the *zawiyah* of sidi 'Ali al-Jamal they read from a book of *hikam* which were explained by a shaykh, the last student of shaykh Sharqawi. In the 'Alawi *zawiyah* of shaykh 'Abdullah al-Haddad we had kind of an international gathering of people -*fuqara*- from several countries (Morocco, Sweden, Spain, Canada, Brazil and the Netherlands) *masha'Allah*. We read from the **Diwan** of shaykh 'Ahmad bin Mustafa al-'Alawi *rahimahullah*. Between shaykh 'Abdullah and shaykh al-'Alawi there was only one person in the *silsilah* of the *tariqah*, shaykh 'Ali al-Budaylami *rahimahullah*, a hadith scholar and *faqih* and student of shaykh al-'Alawi.¹⁰ I came to find out that shaykh 'Abdullah was the shaykh of one of the main translators of Sunni Publications, for whom I also work.

⁹ See here: <http://www.zawiyaalawiya.com/>

¹⁰ See here: <http://www.zawiyaalawiya.com/the-shaykh.html>

In Fez I first heard about imam Ibn Khayyat¹¹ *rahimahullah* and his early work on Muslim history. He was a teacher of imam al-Bukhari *rahimahullah* and in his work (**at-Tarikh**) there is a lot of attention for and stress on the *isnad*.

After a short stay in Fez -nothing seemed to work out the way I wanted - that two brothers and me went back to Qala'at Mkounah, to shaykh Mortada. Allah was taking me to the direction of the path of tasawwuf. Perhaps I wasn't worthy of studying and learning the Qur'an until I had learned to purify my heart first, at least that is how it felt and still feels at the moment. And perhaps I needed to more structured and disciplined and a more focused *niyyah*. The shaykh gave us permission to recite the **Hizb ul-Bahr** for our journey back to him and we did after entering the bus. More on Fez will follow later below.

Back in Qala'at Mkounah and our travels with shaykh Mortada

We started our journey in Qala'at and ended in Casablanca. I will mention some of the highlights of this special journey we undertook, all by car. The first part we spent in the south of Morocco and -together with the shaykh and three other brothers- by car we travelled all the way up to Tamegroute, near the Algerian border, in the desert. In Tamegroute we visited the beautiful *zawiyah* of shaykh Muhammad bin Nasir al-Dar'i *rahimahullah* and it was there where I gave my (unintentional) *bay'ah* to shaykh Mortada, by receiving permission the read the Habibiyyah *wird* and the famous *du'a* against oppression shaykh Muhammad bin Nasir al-Dar'i wrote and which is still recited all over the world, a *du'a* fit for these times as well if we think of the oppression of Muslims worldwide. We read some Qur'an at his grave, his *du'a* and also the so called **Munfarjah** by shaykh Ibn al-Nahwi *rahimahullah*.¹²

This *du'a* has been beautifully translated into English by Hamza Yusuf hafizahullah (as: **The Prayer of the Oppressed**). One can listen to the *du'a* online here in different styles:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APrOYCHnMzk>
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_q6s3paBHo

¹¹ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khalifa_ibn_Khayyat

¹² See here: <http://www.daralhadith.org.uk/?p=516>

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyUC3q89fYs>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU4IX7W3k2E>

It was very special to receive the *idhn* to recite the *du'a* in the *zawiyah* of its author. Some extra info on the name of the author: he is called "al-Dar'i" because he is from *ouad / wadi* Dar'a, which is a very large *ouad* and a land of *awliya* and '*ulama* in Morocco according to shaykh Mortada. It is filled with graves of *awliya* and *zawaya*. In the **Diwan** of shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib we can find two *qasa'id* of his students from this area:

- Sidi Muhammad ibn al-Habib al-Dar'i
- Sidi 'Abdullah ibn al-Habib al-Dar'i

May Allah have mercy on them both. Shaykh Mortada told us that one of them, I can't remember who, memorized all the books he had and gave them to Zawiyah 'Abd al-Malik and they are still existent in the library (*khizanah*) there. Shaykh *mawlay* Hashimi read from them.

Another highlight was our visit to the *zawiyah* and *madrassah* of *sidi* Ibrahim bin al-Basir in Bani / Awlad (?) 'Iyad, in the center of Morocco, in the Anti-Atlas mountains, not far from Beni Mellal. (This was during the second part of our trip where another brother joined us and where we crossed the Atlas mountains and continued our journey to Marrakech and ended in Casablanca.) This was a traditional *madrassah* with around 200 students who are being taught Ash'ari 'aqidah, Maliki fiqh and (Junaydi) tasawwuf, next to *tahfiz* of the Qur'an. We were received and showed around there by shaykh Isma'il bin al-Basir hafizahullah, a scholar of the outward and inward sciences. A beautiful and very good place to study. They were erecting a new building and have plans to develop further into a university. At the moment they had no foreign students but they will welcome them in the near future *insha'Allah*; students will get a room and visa will be arranged, all students are funded by the *muhsinin*. The *dhikr* after *salat al-fajr* was very special. All students there memorize the Qur'an and are being taught in the Islamic sciences at the same time. We were also shown the large and old library of the *zawiyah* which contained many old books and manuscripts.

Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad wrote a beautiful account of his visit there in 2000, which can be read here: http://www.abc.se/~m9783/n/wqm_e.html

These were the two main highlights of our travels with shaykh Mortada which lasted for almost two weeks. We visited many places and people and we benefitted from his *adab* and *akhlaq* and of course his knowledge. Shaykh Mortada is also a shaykh of the outward and inward sciences, always quoting from the Qur'an and hadith and from poetry. We learned also from his wisdom and advice. Few of the things he mentioned I will always remember, like:

- Reciting 80 *salawat* on the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) right after *salat al-'asr*

See here for the proofs:

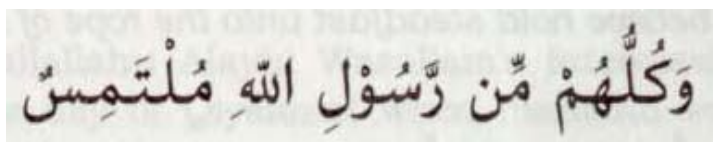
- <http://www.hadithanswers.com/the-80-durood-salawat-after-asr-on-fridays/>
- <http://eshaykh.com/hadith/authenticity-of-hadith-about-durood-sharif-to-recite-after-asr-on-friday/>

- The important role of *zawaya* in spreading traditional Islam in Morocco
- Signs of a true Sufi shaykh and how to find him; I refer for this to the **Diwan** of shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib, especially to the chapter:

a. *Rajaz Khawariq at-Tariq* / The Miracles of the Tariq

b. The story of shaykh Abu Hafs from Algeria how he found shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib

- All Sufi *turuq* go back to the Prophet s.a.w.s. As it is said in the **Burdah**:



"And they all obtained from Rasulullah (s.a.w.s.)" I have heard this being said many times by several people.

Or like they say: "The water is one and the flowers are diverse."

- The disappearance of *mahabbah* between the Muslims and its causes.

- What is a *majdub*?
- Explanation of the saying of ‘Umar radi’Allahu ‘anhu in Sahih al-Bukhari: *Taffaqahu qabla an tasawwadu*.
- Shaykh Mortada told me I belonged to the lucky people because I got to meet the people of Allah. This reminds me of the saying that if Allah wants you, He guides you to His people. And: “Allah doesn’t lead anyone to the path except that He wants them to complete it and reach Him.”
- Receiving the *idhn* for a *wird* from Sufi shaykh can be a *bay’ah* to him.
- The hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.): “*Ballighu ‘anni wa law ayah*” has a different meaning for ‘*ulama* (‘*ilm/shari’ah*) and ‘*awwamm* (*akhlaq/haqiqah*).

On our way to Casablanca we visited a brother of shaykh Isma’il bin al-Basir in a city at the coast called Berreshid, he was called shaykh ‘Abd al-Mughith bin Basir, chairman of the **Majlis ‘Ilmi** there. He gave us some of this time and gifted us with a beautiful copy of the Qur’an in Maghribi script.

When we finally arrived in Casablanca at night I decided to go back to Fez the next morning because my luggage was there. I was exhausted and out of clean clothing.

Fez revisited

I came to realize and understand a lot of things about tasawwuf -although it is most probably just a very tiny fraction of a part of it- during my trip. And something kept pulling me back to Fez as if Allah wanted to teach and show me something.

Back in Fez I had a couple of days before I needed to be in Rabat. I attended the Jumu’ah prayer in Masjid Hafsah and after that I went to the medina to buy some gifts. I attended the *dhikr* in the Tijani *zawiyah* after *salat al-‘asr* and it was beautiful and overwhelming. I loved it. The other times I was in Fez I didn’t get to enjoy the *dhikr* here.

In the taxi I met a wise driver who said the Moroccan had one big problem –and in fact it is a problem most people suffer from- and he expressed it as follows:

نحن في حاجة الى قوم فعال لا قوال

We are in need of a people who act and don't talk. (Freely translated)

One of the things I learned during my trip is that after almost 10 years of being Muslim I really knew nothing compared to all the people I had met during my trip until now and that my *nafs* and *shahawat* kept me from moving ahead.

Twice I tried to attend a lesson in al-Qarawiyyin but it didn't work. Both of the times it was because of a holiday. But what I received back from Allah for it was worth more. The first time I met the very old shaykh al-'Ayyashi (almost like sahib **Dala'il al-Khayrat**) and his son again at al-Qarawiyyin and the second time we actually attended a very nice *majlis* where the **Dala'il al-Khayrat** was recited.

Some of the highlights in Fez you can't miss and which were not mentioned above:

- The graveyard of Bab al-Futuh where many *'ulama* and *awliya* have been buried.

This reminds me of the saying that the East is the land of the Prophets and the West is the land of the saints.

- The reciting of the Tijani wazifah after the 'asr prayer in their *zawiyah/masjid*. Watch and listen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Sg-ckZdDTs> In reality -attending it in person- this is even more beautiful and very powerful. The Tijani path is a separate *tariqah*, without connections to Abu'l-Hassan al-Shadhili (Shadhiliyyah) and 'Abd ul-Qadir al-Jilani (Qadiriyyah) *rahimahumullah*. All of the *туруq* -except the Tijani *tariqah*- in Morocco go back to these two saints. The Tijani *tariqah* falls within the so called Tariqah Muhammadiyyah movement of the 18th century CE.¹³ We were invited at the house of the *khadim* of shaykh Ahmad Tijani in the medina and there we met Tijani's from Sudan, Senegal and Guinee Bissau. One of them was a shaykh and he explained a lot to me about the Tijani path and told me some amazing things. Some of those things I'll share here. He said the Arabic letter *mim* is what separates al-Ahad (Allah) from Ahmad (the Prophet s.a.w.s.). The letter *mim* signifies death (*al-mawt*), meaning the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.s. is the door to Allah. He also told me a lot about the significance of the number 5 in Islam. Shaykh Ahmad Tijani is the

¹³ Read more here about the movement called Tariqah Muhammadiyyah: <http://riyada.blogspot.nl/>

khatm of the *awliya*. Their *tasbih* is different from most others, it has 5 distinctive parts for:

1. Istighfar
2. Salat 'ala'n-Nabi
3. Haylalah
4. Salat al-Fatih
5. Jawharah al-Kamal

- The gathering and recital of the **Dala'il al-Khayrat** on Saturdays led by shaykh *mawlay* Isma'il in his mosque (which is being restored) and *zawiyah*. This place is a little difficult to find but it is near Bab Guissa. At this gathering we met a family member of Ibn Mashish *rahimahullah* from -ustadh Wahhabi from Tanger- who organizes readings of the **Dala'il** on Saturday's at the *maqam* of Ibn Mashish and he told us a lot about Ibn Mashish. The best commentaries on the **Salat al-Mashishiyyah** according to him are:

- a. the *sharh* of shaykh 'Abd al-Majid b. Tayyib b. Kiran
- b. the *sharh* of shaykh Ibn 'Ajibah for its simplicity and clarity (has been translated to English by Suraqah 'Abd al-'Aziz)

The impact and importance of Ibn Mashish in Morocco is big. Next time I visit Morocco I will need to pay a visit to him *insha'Allah*.

The gathering we attended in Fez was very special. The *zawiyah* was packed with young and old people and there were some other foreigners. Once again an international gathering of people from Morocco, Sweden, the UK (but originally Syria), the U.S. and the Netherlands. My stay in Fez was once again concluded with the **Dala'il**, just like last time. Shaykh Isma'il and his family keep it alive in Fez.

Still on my list to visit in Fez are:

- A visit to masjid al-Andalus, once a center of learning competing with al-Qarawiyyin.
- Attending some lessons in al-Qarawiyyin

- The Tijani *dhikr* on Friday

- The Jazuli *zawiyah*

And more places and people, if Allah allows me.

A last booktip for every *murid*: **The Basic Research** by Ibn ‘Ajibah.¹⁴

Rabat, Salé, Kenitra and Temara

The last days of my stay in Morocco were spent in 4 different places although mostly in Rabat. I had to be in Rabat for a wedding of a dear friend in the nearby city of Kenitra (around 25 km); through his family I got in contact with tasawwuf and the Darqawa in Morocco. I actually owe them a lot of gratitude and thanks and we ask Allah to reward them bountiful. They are truly blessed and special.

I Rabat I rented a room in a beautiful *riyadh* in the old town and at night we had a meeting (the night before the wedding) in Salé. I met another old friend there as well and he told me his family name originated from a Sufi *tariqah* called the Hamadsha, similar to the ‘Isawiyyah, and referred me to a study on them in English: **“The Hamadsha; A study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry”** by Vincent Crapanzano, a very tough read.

Some things worth to visit in Rabat and Salé:

- The small medina of Oudaya; here is Rabat’s oldest masjid and it’s all blue/white houses and tiny streets. You will have some stunning views on the sea from here.

- The maqam of sidi al-‘Arabi al-Sayah *rahimahullah*. Beautiful but hidden from sight a little bit, near the medina of Oudaya.

- The unfinished mosque with its pillars and huge minaret -which looks like the Kutubiyyah of Marrakech- near the graves of the Moroccan kings Muhammad the 5th and Hassan the 2nd *rahimahumullah*.

¹⁴ Read more about it here: http://www.deenislam.co.uk/mix/basic_research.htm

- The *maqam*'s of:

- a. the other Ibn 'Ashir, sidi Ahmad b. Muhammad;
- b. sidi 'Abd al-Qadir al-Harathi, with a striking green dome, and
- c. sidi 'Abdallah b. Hassun, the main and most well-known saint of Salé.

- The Tijani *zawiyah* in Salé (I didn't get to visit the Tijani *zawiyah* in Rabat)

- The big mosque in the medina of Salé

- The Bou 'Inaniyyah Madrassah in Salé

In Rabat and Salé everything is at walking distance.

For students of the Qur'an a visit to the Imam Dukkali *markaz* with shaykh Sahabi, in Salé is a must.

When in Rabat I decided to pay shaykh Hassan al-Kittani, one of my teachers, a visit the day before I left. I had met him last year as well and wanted to see him again. I went to his house and I was lucky to join him for a lesson in nearby Temara. He was teaching from the famous **Murshid al-Mu'in**, the 'aqidah section. Together with a few students we had a lesson and afterwards we read some *ahadith* from the **Muwatta** and had dinner. The lesson was being recorded and transmitted online through Paltalk. A nice and blessed gathering to conclude my stay in Morocco. The next morning I had to leave with sadness in my heart.

One last thing for interested students of the **Murshid**: I came to find out that shaykh Hassan had been working with other people on a new edition of the **Murshid al-Mu'in** with some changes on the section of 'aqidah, a simplified 'aqidah free from logic and *kalam*. I had a copy of it in my hands. It hasn't been printed yet for publication.

Some benefits and insights for students of knowledge

- Remind yourself of the expression by Yahya b. Yahya when he sat in the circle with Imam Malik *rahimahullah* and for the first time elephants entered the city and

everyone ran of to see them except him: “*I didn’t come for the sake of an elephant*” (ما جئت لاجل فيل) i.e. I came here to study and not for any other reason. A student of knowledge doesn’t go to Morocco as a tourist or for reasons of tourism.

- Morocco is now one of the most safe and best countries in the Arabic speaking world to go and study traditional Islam in my humble opinion although largely undiscovered.

- Travel (*safar* in Arabic) is to suffer (most probably this English word originates from Arabic if we would look at the root letters), I experienced that. Travelling is part of seeking knowledge and it doesn’t go with ease and/or comfort. The Prophet s.a.w.s. said in a sound hadith: “Travelling is part of the punishment of Hellfire.” (Bukhari and Muslim) This doesn’t mean that travelling is something dispraised though.

- You can join the daily lessons in Jami’ah al-Qarawiyyin in the medina for FREE; just as it was back in the old times; even if you are there for just a short period, you take what you can get from the ‘*ulama* there and benefit. All you need to do is tell the admin there out of *adab*. The lessons that are taught there are the advanced and higher levels. There is a schedule. The lower levels are taught at the new Qarawiyyin outside the medina.

- For a private teacher just ask around in the Jami’ah al-Qarawiyyin or in the area around it.

- Morocco is the land of tasawwuf and *turuq*, a land of *awliya* and ‘*ulama*, a land of *dhikr* and *qasa’id*.

- Seeking knowledge is not about what you want and what you plan to do. Allah will take where you need to be.

- Next to studying the Islamic sciences you need tasawwuf. This reminds one of the importance of purifying your heart.

- The importance of *suhbah* with a shaykh and *tullab* to improve you *adab* and *akhlaq*.

- The importance of the **Burdah**, the **Dala’il al-Khayrat**, **Matn Ibn ‘Ashir**, the **Hamziyyah**, the **Diwan** of shaykh Muhammad bin al-Habib and the **Diwan** of shaykh

Ahmad bin Mustafa al-'Alawi in the daily lives of many Moroccan people. Most Moroccan people in Europe have lost their connection to these texts.

- The importance of having a *wird*. The one who doesn't have a *wird* is like a *qird* (a monkey) as the *'ulama* say.
- The importance of (singing) *qasa'id*.
- The importance of learning Arabic. In Morocco there are several centers for learning Arabic.
- For memorization of the Qur'an and other texts Morocco is the number one country. Memorization is by *dabt al-sadr* and *dabt al-kitabah* with the *lawh*.
- Fez is the scholarly and spiritual center of Morocco, the center for *'ilm* and *tasawwuf*.
- The desert of Morocco is the best place to memorize Qur'an and to learn *adab* and *akhlaq*.
- The importance of *adab* and *akhlaq* with everyone you meet. Shuyukh, teachers, fellow students, *fuqara* and other people, in fact all of Allah's creation. *Adab* and *akhlaq* come before *'ilm*. *'Ilm* without *adab* and *akhlaq* is nothing. Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Haddad told us: "Knowledge is like salt and *adab* is the flower. To bake a good bread you need a little bit of salt."
- There is an essential difference between a shaykh of *tarbiyyah* in a *tariqah* and a shaykh of the outward sciences. A shaykh of *tarbiyyah* in a *tariqah* doesn't necessarily need to be a shaykh in the outward sciences and speak Arabic.
- Knowledge doesn't come to you. You need to go to those who teach it.
- Knowledge doesn't come in one go, it needs struggle, perseverance, dedication, time.
- Morocco has a strong oral culture.
- Spent time with students of knowledge to see how they live.

- The social coherence of the Moroccan people, especially outside the cities and the importance of *dhikr* in social gatherings.
- The importance of *suwar* Yasin and al-Waqi'ah.
- Deprivation of sleep.
- *Khidmah* towards your *shuyukh* and fellow students.
- The *adab* of sleeping and travelling.
- A true shaykh and *sayyid* is someone who serves his students.
- *Dhikr* makes the difference.
- Check your *niyyah*.
- Don't complain and try and do without or with less at least.

Conclusion

With this I end my account and I presented it in an abbreviated form to you. I ask Allah it will benefit everyone who reads it. I ask Allah to accept my journey and forgive me my sins.

Allah's poor slave Harun

End